

causes, and puts the action of demons one step further off. The effect of uncleanness was that it made the affected person unfit and unable to perform ritual acts on which human welfare was supposed to depend. The affected person became dangerous to others, and was forced to banish himself from societal contact with them. He was also cut off from access to the superior powers. It was therefore indispensable that he should recover cleanness in order to carry on his life. The recovery was accomplished through ritual acts and devices, and chiefly through the intervention of shamans, who were experts in the rites and devices required.

559. Female uncleanness. The ritual notion of uncleanness, being a product of deduction from demonistic world philosophy, was arbitrary, and was capable of indefinite extension. It was not a disease, was not held to facts by symptoms of pain, etc. Women were held to be unclean, and causes of uncleanness by contact, at marriage, menstruation, and childbirth. They were always possessed by demons, which accounted for their special functions as mothers. The periods mentioned were periods of special activity of the demonistic function. The belief was common in the Orient that a woman was dangerous to her husband at marriage. A demon left her at that time in the nuptial bloodshed. At menstruation women were dangerous to men. The ritual idea of uncleanness was so extended that women were put under a kind of imprisonment for a time, especially in the Zoroastrian system (sec. 561), in order to remove them from social contact. At child bearing also they were forced into retirement

for a specified period.¹ Corpses also were unclean and made all those unclean who came into contact with them. There are numerous other and comparatively trifling causes of ritual uncleanness.²

560. Uncleanness in ethnography. The Macusi of British Guiana forbid women to bathe during the period, and also forbid them to go into the forest, for they would risk bites from enamored snakes.⁸ If a woman of the Ngumba, in Kamerun, bears a dead child, the uncleanness is double. She

¹ Levit. xii.

² *Ibid.*) xiii, xiv, xv.

⁸ Schomburgk, *Brit. Guiana* II, 316.